

August 10, 2015

Chairman Tom Wheeler  
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn  
Commissioner Ajit Pai  
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel  
Commissioner Michael O'Rielly  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman and Commissioners:

Access Humboldt respectfully submits these Reply Comments to urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to deny approval of the proposed Altice acquisition of Suddenlink [WC Docket No. 15 135] because the transaction fails to meet the public interest standard. At minimum we believe that the FCC must require compliance with local ordinances as well as locally enforceable consumer protections with specific public benefits as conditions for approval.

We support the comments filed in this proceeding by the County of Humboldt's Board of Supervisors (Estelle Fennell, Chair) and the California Emerging Technologies Fund (Sunne Wright McPeak, President & CEO).

Access Humboldt is a community media organization serving the residents of Humboldt County California with the mission of "local voices through community media." Access Humboldt manages and operates local cable access TV channels and online services, offers media production training, facilities and equipment, and promotes free speech, community media and broadband internet access. As the lead broadband deployment and adoption agency for County of Humboldt and Cities of Eureka, Arcata, Fortuna, Rio Dell, Ferndale and Blue Lake, we seek universal access to open networks for local communities on California's North Coast.

From experience we know that consolidated absentee ownership reduces competition, threatens media localism and harms information diversity. And we note that Altice's purchase of controlling interest in Suddenlink will transfer private ownership for essential communications infrastructure in Humboldt County to even more distant owners, which is against the public interest.

In April 2014, Suddenlink local cable franchise ended and a new State issued cable franchise took effect. In August 2014, Suddenlink was informed that they are out of compliance with local ordinances adopted by the County of Humboldt and the Cities of Eureka, Arcata, Fortuna, Rio Dell, Ferndale and Blue Lake, California which all require payment of public, education and government access (PEG) fees totalling 3% of video revenue.

For the past year, Suddenlink refuses to fully fund PEG community access as required by local ordinances adopted years ago and so fails to meet local needs and interests. So, we ask that the FCC require that Suddenlink verify full compliance with local ordinances before considering approval of their application for transfer of ownership control.

If the FCC does approve the proposed transaction, we request that the FCC address local concerns by ordering that Altice and Suddenlink meet four basic requirements:

**Promote Universal Access** with investments in new infrastructure for our least served people and places;

**Ensure Localism** with meaningful support for PEG access community media and consumer protection roles for local, state and tribal jurisdictions;

**Protect Open Internet** with strong net neutrality requirements for common carriage and non discriminatory interconnection; and,

**Extend Broadband Adoption** by providing substantial free connections and at cost support for low income communities and community anchor institutions including schools, libraries, health providers, public media and civic organizations. Altice/Suddenlink must be required to:

Include all low income households in adoption plans and programs;

Set high performance goals for network symmetry, latency and speeds;

Fund and support community media and broadband access through Tribes, States and Local Governments;

Establish mechanisms for local participation in affected communities; and,

Offer stand alone internet service without data caps that is subject to local accountability and enforceable net neutrality rules.

We join in requesting that the FCC take a more active oversight role while also supporting state and local jurisdictions to ensure universal access to open Internet and local community media so that the benefits of digital information are delivered to low income families and community anchor institutions in a more meaningful way.

Absentee ownership of communications infrastructure, such as this Altice/Suddenlink transaction, creates a real need for specific and locally enforceable public interest obligations. Lacking proper regulatory oversight, experience shows that Altice, Suddenlink and other communication utility owners will fail to deliver adequate service to meet local needs and community interests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'S. McLaughlin', with a stylized, looping flourish at the end.

Sean McLaughlin  
Executive Director  
Access Humboldt

CC: President Picker, California Public Utilities Commission  
California Assemblymember Jim Wood  
California State Senator Mike McGuire  
Congressman Jared Huffman (CA 2)